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Letter dated 22 November 2011 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to refer to the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) and the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), as well as to Security Council resolution 1609 (2005) and 2008 (2011), in which the Council authorized the temporary redeployment of military and police personnel, as appropriate, between UNMIL and UNOCI to address challenges that cannot be managed within the authorized personnel ceiling of a given mission. I also wish to refer to the letter from the President of the Security Council to me dated 27 September 2011 (S/2011/594) noting the return of the three armed helicopters from UNOCI to UNMIL and endorsing my recommendation that options be kept open for the possible use of those helicopters from UNMIL to address security challenges in Côte d'Ivoire, including Abidjan, and for the possible temporary relocation of the helicopters to UNOCI during the upcoming Ivorian legislative elections. Furthermore, I am grateful for the Security Council's approval of the temporary transfer from UNOCI to UNMIL of one infantry company and three formed police unit platoons to reinforce UNMIL during the period of the Liberian elections. I wish to inform you that the process for returning those units to UNOCI has been started and is expected to be completed by 30 November 2011.

President Alassane Ouattara and his Government have taken a number of steps towards restoring normalcy in Côte d'Ivoire, including the reconstitution of the security and rule of law institutions, the filling of key positions in the armed forces, police and gendarmerie, and the transfer of law and order tasks to the responsible law enforcement agencies. Despite these positive developments, the security situation in Côte d'Ivoire, particularly in Abidjan and in western Côte d'Ivoire, remains highly volatile.

Progress in developing a new national disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme and in the collection of weapons, including from civilian communities, remains slow. The Forces républicaines de Côte d'Ivoire, which assumed responsibility for restoring security, remains an amorphous, ill-equipped force and is wrestling with discipline-related challenges as well as command and control issues. A number of regular and irregular armed elements that remain loyal to former President Laurent Gbagbo, including from the Young Patriots and the former Republican Guard, continue to have access to arms and could pose a significant threat during the legislative elections. In addition, grievances by security personnel with regard to the process of reconstituting the security forces, which may have contributed, inter alia, to a shooting incident in Gendarmerie barracks in

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Abidjan during the night of 15 October 2011, carry the risk of being further exploited by spoilers before and during the Ivorian legislative elections.

In western Côte d'Ivoire, cross-border movements of armed groups and weapons have become a direct security threat to Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia, as well as a destabilizing factor in the subregion. UNOCI continues to report a number of security incidents in western Côte d'Ivoire, most significantly an attack in mid-September 2011 on two border villages in western Côte d'Ivoire which resulted in at least 21 persons being killed, several wounded, and some 30 houses being burned, and incidents in late October and early November 2011 in that area which resulted in at least four civilians being killed. Meanwhile, the humanitarian situation resulting from the Ivorian post-elections crisis remains a challenge, with some 195,000 persons displaced inside the country and some 182,000 Ivorian refugees in neighbouring countries, including some 138,000 in Liberia, who have not yet returned to their homes because of security concerns.

In preparation for the upcoming Ivorian legislative elections, UNOCI conducted a threat assessment and found that there is a potential risk that spoilers could seek to disrupt the electoral process. UNOCI anticipates a deterioration of the already volatile security situation, in particular in Abidjan and in western Côte d'Ivoire, where elections risk exacerbating political grievances and existing tensions, including between communities, which could lead to violence in various parts of the country. UNOCI has assessed that it requires reinforcement of its existing capabilities as part of its prudent planning in order to be in a position to deter and respond to possible security threats in a timely manner. The proposed redeployment of uniformed personnel and assets from UNMIL to UNOCI, as detailed below and during the suggested specific time frame, would not jeopardize the ability of UNMIL to carry out its mandate. The situation in Liberia will be kept under constant review.

As indicated in my previous letters, in particular my letters to the President of the Security Council of 13 June 2011 (S/2011/351) and 15 September 2011 (S/2011/577), the three armed helicopters from UNMIL proved to be an invaluable asset in Côte d'Ivoire in preventing attacks against civilians, as well as in deterring cross-border movements of armed groups. I am grateful for the Council's authorization of the continued use of the armed helicopters from UNMIL to address security challenges in western Côte d'Ivoire, conveyed in the letter from the President of the Security Council of 27 September 2011 (S/2011/594).

However, considering the significant risks of holding legislative elections in such a volatile security environment, the use of the armed helicopters throughout the country, and not only in the border areas, would provide UNOCI with the necessary deterrence, protection and surveillance capability, including in support of ground operations. In particular, it would enable the Mission to respond in a timely manner to security incidents throughout the country, while at the same time ensuring adequate monitoring of the border area with Liberia.

Furthermore, as you will recall, in my letter of 13 June 2011 (S/2011/351), I had advised you that the Secretariat was exploring various options to deploy a replacement unit to UNOCI of two military utility helicopters. This deployment has not yet materialized despite efforts to generate these assets. Therefore, as indicated in that letter, it would be prudent to keep open the option whereby the two UNMIL military utility helicopters could be temporarily redeployed to UNOCI in order to

provide the necessary mobility that UNOCI would require during such a demanding period.

In the light of the above, I recommend that the Security Council authorize the temporary transfer from UNMIL to UNOCI of the three Mi-24 armed helicopters and the two military utility helicopters, to be operational as of 4 December and up to 31 December 2011 in order to enhance the capacity of UNOCI to meet the necessary requirements during the electoral period. The military aviation reinforcement of three armed helicopters and two military utility helicopters would include some 60 personnel.

In order to enhance the security response capacity of UNOCI, particularly in high risk areas, additional uniformed personnel are required. Therefore, I also recommend that the Security Council authorize the temporary transfer from UNMIL to UNOCI of one infantry company, comprising 150 personnel, to reinforce UNOCI in western Côte d'Ivoire, and three formed police unit platoons with supporting elements, comprising 100 personnel, to Abidjan.

These units would need to be operational in Côte d'Ivoire as of 4 December and up to 31 December 2011. The duration of the deployment of the uniformed personnel and military helicopters takes into account the risk that the tensions as a result of the legislative elections could escalate into violence before, during or after polling day, in the light of the existing volatility of the security situation.

The Secretariat is in the process of seeking the consent of the concerned troop-contributing countries for these arrangements. One police-contributing country has formally given its consent for the temporary transfer. In order to ensure the timely redeployment of personnel and assets from UNMIL to UNOCI, I should be grateful if the Security Council would grant advance approval of these proposed arrangements.

I should be grateful if you could bring this letter to the attention of the members of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) **BAN** Ki-moon